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The Memorial Building

**ABRAHAM LINCOLN
NATIONAL
HISTORICAL PARK
KENTUCKY**

ABRAHAM LINCOLN NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK



United States Department of the Interior

Harold L. Ickes, Secretary

National Park Service, Newton B. Drury, Director



Here the life of Abraham Lincoln began, the man who, more than any other, preserved the American Union in the time of its greatest crisis, 1861-65; brought about the abolition of slavery within the United States; and authored the immortal Gettysburg Address and the First Inaugural.

On a raw frontier farm of rolling land on the edge of "the Barrens," in the cabin by the Sinking Spring, was born the man whose strides carried him awkwardly, yet majestically, over a path which began in common Kentucky clay and ended in immortality. Here was born the man who said, "Why should there not be a patient confidence in the ultimate justice of the people? Is there any better or equal hope in the world?" More enduring than bronze or marble, this spot shall speak its message of the mystery and majesty of life to Americans down through the ages.

The Lincoln Family

In the midst of the Indian wars and raids at the close of the Revolution the Lincoln family moved to the frontier region of Kentucky. The father of Abraham Lincoln, the 16th President, was Thomas Lincoln; his grandfather was Abraham, for whom he was named; and his great-grandfather was John Lincoln. This John Lincoln had moved from near Reading, Pa., to the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, and his son, Abraham, together with his family moved across the mountains into Kentucky sometime between 1782 and 1784. Here Abraham, the grandfather, was killed by an Indian from ambush. This event probably occurred in May 1786. Thomas, the youngest son, was then about 10 years old.

About 1800 Thomas Lincoln settled down in Elizabethtown and during the

next few years was a hard working and industrious man of that community, acquiring a reputation as a carpenter.

On June 10, 1806, Thomas Lincoln filed a declaration of intention to marry Nancy Hanks, and two days later, on June 12, 1806, they were married by the Rev. Jesse Head. The newly married couple made their home in Elizabethtown. Here their first child, Sarah, was born in 1807.

The image of Nancy Hanks is blurred and uncertain to us of this generation. One authority has said of her, "dim as the dream of a shifting mirage, her face and figure waver through the mists of time and rumor." Although her physical features left no definite impression upon the minds of those who years later tried to recall her image, there is an almost unanimous agreement among these witnesses concerning her mental and spiritual attributes. That she was possessed of a fine native intelligence, of courage, and of a morality above reproach, that she was kind and affectionate, seems fairly clear.

The Birthplace of Abraham Lincoln

On December 12, 1808, Thomas Lincoln bought for \$200 in cash a 300-acre farm, known as the Sinking Spring Farm, situated a few miles south of Hodgen's Mill. Here, he and his wife and their infant daughter took up their abode in a one room log cabin near a large limestone spring of cool water which had given its name to the place.

It was in this one room log cabin near the Sinking Spring that the child, Abraham, was born to Thomas and Nancy Hanks Lincoln on February 12, 1809.

The Lincolns lived at the birthplace site, which eventually was lost to them because of a defective land title, about two and a half years. Prior to mid-summer in 1811 they moved to a farm on Knob Creek, about 10 miles to the northeast. Their residence there lasted only a few years, for in November or December 1816 Thomas Lincoln left Kentucky and made a new home in the wilderness settlement of Little Pigeon Creek, about 16 miles north of the Ohio River, in Indiana. Nancy Hanks Lincoln, the mother of Abraham, lived only about 2 years after the removal to Indiana. An epidemic came to the little settlement on Pigeon Creek and, while attending to the stricken, she herself was taken ill and died within a week, on October 5, 1818. The mother of Abraham Lincoln was buried in an unmarked grave in a little clearing in the midst of the deep woods.

The Park

Abraham Lincoln National Historical Park comprises 110½ acres of land, nearly 100 acres of which were included in the original Thomas Lincoln farm. Here are situated the Memorial Building housing the traditional Lincoln birthplace log cabin, the Sinking Spring, and the ancient boundary oak tree which was a landmark at the time of Lincoln's birth. The Lincoln birthplace was deeded to the United States Government in 1916 by the Lincoln Farm Association. Since 1933 it has been administered by the National Park Service of the Department of the Interior.

The Birthplace Cabin

The log cabin in the Memorial Building is the traditional birthplace cabin. It is impossible to say with certainty that it is the original cabin. From 1861 to the present time the history of the log cabin which is now displayed within

Weinman Statue of Lincoln in Hodgenville



the Memorial Building is fairly clear. Its history prior to 1861 is a matter of controversy and doubt. Nor is there conclusive evidence concerning the specific location of the original cabin. Certain testimony indicates that it stood on top of the knoll where the Memorial Building is now situated; still other that it stood under the knoll, a short distance from the Sinking Spring, and about on a level with it.

The first individual to become interested in preserving the birthplace cabin was Dr. George Rodman, who, in March 1861, bought a log cabin standing on the birthplace farm and moved it a little over a mile to the north and reerected it on his own farm. Here it remained until 1894, when it was purchased by a representative of A. W. Dennett of New York and taken back to the Lincoln farm where 110½ acres of land had been purchased about this time by Mr. Dennett. In the succeeding years the cabin was dismantled, the logs carefully marked, and taken to various expositions throughout the

country where it was exhibited. Eventually, the cabin was stored in the basement of the old Poffenhausen mansion at College Point, Long Island, N. Y. It remained there until 1906 when it was purchased by the Lincoln Farm Association. It was then taken to Louisville under a military escort where, after being reerected as a feature of the Louisville Homecoming celebration, the cabin again went into storage. In 1909 it was taken temporarily to the birthplace farm for the ceremonies attending the laying of the cornerstone of the Memorial Building. In 1911, upon the completion of this structure, the cabin was taken on the last of its travels back to the site of its origin and reerected within the Memorial Building.

The Memorial Building

In 1904, the Lincoln Farm Association, of which Richard Lloyd Jones, then managing editor, and Robert J. Collier, publisher of *Collier's Weekly*, were the leading members, was formed for the

Old boundary white oak



The Sinking Spring





Traditional Lincoln birthplace cabin showing door and window

purpose of raising by popular subscription funds to purchase the birthplace and make it a national memorial. The 110½ acres now comprising the historical park were purchased for the Lincoln Farm Association in 1905, although title did not pass to the Association until 1907. On April 16, 1916, the Lincoln Farm Association deeded its holdings to the United States of America.

The Memorial Building, designed by John Russell Pope and built of Connecticut pink granite and Tennessee marble, was constructed by the Lincoln Farm Association in the years 1909-11 through funds raised by popular subscription. Over 100,000 citizens, many of them school children, contributed to this fund. The cornerstone of the building was laid by President Theodore

Roosevelt on February 12, 1909, the one hundredth anniversary of Lincoln's birth. The chief address at the dedication of the building on November 9, 1911, was delivered by President Taft. When the area, together with its improvements, was deeded to the United States in 1916, President Wilson journeyed to the site and made the acceptance speech in behalf of the Government and of the people of the United States.

How to Reach the Park

The Abraham Lincoln birthplace is situated approximately 3 miles south of Hodgenville, Ky., on U. S. Highways No. 31E and No. 68, the main traveled road running from south to north through Tennessee and Kentucky, from Nashville to Louisville, to Bardstown, and on into the heart of the Blue Grass at Lexington. Transcontinental Highway U. S. No. 60 intercepts U. S. Highway No. 31W at Fort Knox, about 30 miles north of Hodgenville.

Service to the Public

The birthplace farm and Memorial Building are open to visitors daily. Attendants are on duty at the latter place. Organizations and groups will be given special service if arrangements are made in advance with the Custodian.

Administration

The park is administered by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior. Communications concerning the park should be addressed to the Custodian, Abraham Lincoln National Historical Park, Hodgenville, Ky.

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